

Amendments to the Claims:

Please replace all prior claims versions and listings with the following:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-19 (canceled)

20. (new) A method for orienting sections of a plasticized ceramic extrudate, comprising:

applying a reference mark to a plasticized extrudate as the extrudate exits an extrusion die onto an extrudate support;

correcting corkscrew deformation of the extrudate exiting the extrusion die in response to a reference mark misalignment, said correcting being prior to the extrudate being cut to form a cut section of the extrudate;

cutting the extrudate to form the cut section of the extrudate;

floatingly supporting the cut section of the extrudate on an air bearing;

taking an optical reading of the reference mark on the cut section of the floatingly supported extrudate and correcting any misalignment of the reference mark from a predetermined reference point;

transferring the cut section of the extrudate laterally via frictional force to a dryer tray;
and

imaging an end of the cut section of the extrudate on the dryer tray and comparing the image with a target range for alignment.

21. (new) The method of claim 20 wherein the reference mark applying step comprises applying an ink jet mark to the extrudate.

22. (new). The method of claim 20 wherein the step of correcting corkscrew deformation of the extrudate comprises contacting a surface of the extrudate with elastically deformable rollers having pivot axes aligned askew from an extrudate axis of movement along the extrudate support in a skew direction causing extrudate rotation counter to the corkscrew deformation.

23. (new) The method of claim 20 wherein correcting any misalignment of the reference mark from a predetermined reference point comprises contacting a surface of the cut section

of extrudate with a pivotally supported elastically deformable roller having a pivot axis oriented out of perpendicular alignment with a centroid axis of the cut section of extrudate.

24. (new) The method of claim 20 wherein the step of transferring the cut section of the extrudate laterally via frictional force comprises contacting the cut section with pad supports constructed of a flexibly resilient foam.

25. (new) The method of claim 20 wherein the imaging step comprises imaging first and second ends of the extrudate.